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Papandrea Speaks at Media Law Seminar

12/20/05—Professor Mary-Rose Papandrea was invited to speak at a seminar on media law, sponsored by the Institute of Law of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) through a grant from the United States Embassy.

At the seminar, which was held on December 10 and 11, Professor Papandrea gave two lectures on U.S. media law: "Licensing and the Media" and "The Reporters' Privilege." The purpose of the conference was to educate the Chinese on United States media law. Over 40 scholars, journalists, and state officials attended the two-day seminar, held at the Jihua Spa & Resort in Beijing. Three other American scholars lectured on various other topics including the history of U.S. media law, U.S. Internet law, and U.S. media ownership restrictions.

"The Chinese seemed particularly interested to learn that the U.S. does not license the media (aside from licenses to operate a broadcast radio or television station) or exercise control over the internet; that one of the only content-based regulations permitted is for indecency on broadcast media; and that reporters often receive critical government information from anonymous sources," writes Papandrea. "I was surprised to learn that many Chinese scholars and journalists are openly and actively engaged in media law reform efforts in their country and that most of them were already familiar with many of the basics of U.S. media law. Chinese citizens have been bringing defamation lawsuits against the media with increasing frequency, and at times the Chinese courts have borrowed some of the protections for speech that we have recognized here in the States. Although the press has a long way to go to reach the level of independence and freedom the American media enjoys – indeed, the Chinese government stills owns and exercises control over the media – it is thrilling to be involved at the inception of media law reform in China. I hope to maintain the contacts I have established with various scholars and journalists in China to continue to assist them in their media law reform efforts in the coming years."

Papandrea met with journalists from The Beijing News and the Legal Daily while she was in Beijing, and gave lectures at the Communications University and at the Procuratorial Daily, a leading Chinese newspaper.

Papandrea was invited to participate in the China media law conference on the basis of her experience as a media defense lawyer and as a media law scholar. Before she became a professor, she was an associate at Williams & Connolly in Washington, DC, where she represented a wide-range of media clients including The Washington Post, The National Enquirer, and all of the major television networks.

The First Amendment and media law is the central focus of Papandrea's teaching and scholarship. This fall, she taught Constitutional Law II (with an emphasis on the First Amendment) and a seminar on defamation and privacy law. She has published an article about the right of access to information after September 11, and she is currently working on article about the reporters' privilege.

